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1831

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CLAYTON'S EDITION.

POPPING THE QUESTION:

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Copy 1

A FARCE,

In One Act.

BY J. B. BUCKSTONE, ESQ.

Luke the Labourer, Snakes in the Grass, The Happiest Day of my Life, &c.

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY, [CUMBERLAND'S EDITION,] WITH REMARKS, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY D—G.

To which are added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME,—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS,
ENTRANCES AND EXITS,—RELATIVE POSITIONS OF
THE PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE,—AND THE
WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

As Performed at the

THEATRES ROYAL, LONDON.

New-York:

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Cast of the Characters,

*As performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,
March 23, 1830.*

<i>Mr. Primrose,</i>	<i>Mr. Farren,</i>
<i>Henry Thornton,</i>	<i>Mr. Lee.</i>
<i>Ellen Murray,</i>	<i>Mrs. Newcombe.</i>
<i>Miss Biffin,</i>	<i>Mrs. Glover.</i>
<i>Miss Winterblossom,</i>	<i>Mrs. Jones.</i>
<i>Bobbin,</i>	<i>Mrs. Oger.</i>

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REMARKS.

Popping the Question.

THERE is nothing that requires greater delicacy and caution, than what is termed "Popping the Question;" for, unless we resolve to give a fine lady's nerves an irrecoverable shock, we shall adopt that happy ambiguity which (like the work of skilful poet or painter) leaves much to the imagination. The old-fashioned mode of making love, "will you marry me, my dear Ally Croaker?" is perfectly antediluvian.—We must not call a spade a spade—neither must we speak by the card, lest *precipitation* should undo us—plainness of speech is wholly incompatible with modern polite courtship; your well-bred lover will just hint a sigh, and hesitate a glance, leaving the matter in a delicate state of uncertainty—"Well,—as you guess!" This making love by implication and innuendo is often productive of strange misapprehensions; for so sensitive are some ladies on this tender point—so alive to conjugal impressions—that an ogle, inadvertently discharged, immediately becomes *particular*:—each cries—"That was levelled at me!" Thus, placed between the Scylla and Charybdis of courtship, the wiser plan will be to follow Hamlet's advice to the players—not to o'erdo *termagant*, or to come tardy off; but, in the very torrent, tempest and whirlwind of our *passion*, to acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. *Virginibus puerisque canto*; yet not alone to youths I sing, and maidens uninform'd; but to lovers of more ancient standing, to whom, as will appear in the sequel, this advice is more immediately applicable.

Mr Henry Primrose, one of those precise, neat, trimly-dressed old gentlemen, without whom no tea or card-table is considered complete, becomes violently smitten with his ward, Ellen Murray; but how to *pop the question* with due decorum is the rub. The young lady, not aware of her guardian's matrimonial intentions, has already provided herself with a lover, in case of need, in the person of a *second* Henry, whose surname is *Thornton*.

By the artful contrivance of her abigail, Bobbin, the gentleman is smuggled into the house during the temporary absence of Mr. Primrose. In the midst of a very tender scene, the old bachelor most inopportunely returns, Mr. Henry Thornton makes a precipitate retreat into an adjoining room, and every thing is put straight and in order, as if nothing had happened. Having fully made up his mind to pop the question, Mr Primrose, by way of prelude, puts on an air of particular kindness and condescension, and just ventures a conjugal hint; this raises a doubt in the mind of the lady, whether the old Argus has not in reality discovered her secret. An ambiguous reply, which proves Miss Ellen nothing loth to change her condition, inspires her ancient Corydon with fresh courage—he expatiates on the delights of the tender passion, promises her the man of her choice, and carries on a scene of such amorous equivoque, that Miss, applying these tender phrases to her lover elect, talks of her "*dear Henry!*" This fairly transports Mr. Primrose—her "*dear Henry!*" he has now proof positive that he, Henry Primrose, is the chosen swain: he therefore resolves to put himself in conjugal order, and to be married forthwith. As a preliminary step, he makes it a point of civility to consult two maiden ladies of his acquaintance, Miss Winterblossom and Miss Biffin, for whose opinions he entertains great reverence. To them he pops the question with his accustomed ambiguity, so that each lady is led to conclude that she is the especial object of his regard; and, being neither young nor sore afraid, they soon capitulate, and consent to make him happy. The courtship scene, between Mr. Primrose and Miss Biffin, is full of laughable equivoque. The amorous dalliance of the old maid, to whom a word on the subject of courtship and matrimony is like a spark upon gunpowder—her facility in catching the idea, and *anticipating* all that Mr. Priimrose would *seem to say*, is extremely whimsical. After Mr. P. has hied forth to consult the old ladies, Henry the younger emerges from his concealment; when, aided by the cogent arguments of Bobbin, he prevails on his mistress to make the best use of her time, by instantly repairing to the church. Miss Biffin now indulges in a matrimonial vision, plans a variety of alterations in the apartments, talks of learning the *piano*, and threatens to curtail the frolics of her future hus-

band, in regard to pinching the arms of other ladies. While wrapped in this delightful reverie, she receives a visit from Miss Winterblossom, a pursey spinster, nigh fifty, fat and bandy,—

“Wig like a cauliflower,
Neck like a jolly tower;”

and here a fresh scene of equivoque ensues ; for, bred in the polite school of Mr. Primrose, they ask one another to become bridesmaid in such *ambiguous* terms, that they both seem to consent ; an explanation ensues, and unbounded is the rage of the rival queens. Miss Biffin,—

“A haughty Juno, of majestic size,
With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes;”

is unmercifully satirical on her squat rival, Miss Winterblossom ; who, nothing daunted, bustles up to Miss Biffin, and bullies the monument. She holds the mirror up to *ill-nature*, and bids Miss B. contemplate her *own* gigantic proportions. In the midst of this wild uproar, Mr. Primrose enters : the whole place is in disorder ; chairs and tables overturned, and the two ladies just beginning to *show fight*. The prim bachelor quickly undeceives them, by proclaiming the *real* object of his flame. This draws down their combined fury on *his* head ; they chase him round the room, and deafen him with their reproaches. He takes courage—becomes equally complimentary ; declaring that he would as soon think of marrying Adam’s grandmother, as the Misses Biffin and Winterblossom, adding, that he shall shortly have a *wife*, and consequently, a *protector* ! The matrimonial party now enter, and the laugh takes a strong turn against Mr. Primrose, who, after enduring the *cross-fire* of the two disappointed old maids, promises never again to *pop the question*, it being a saying of his friend, Lord North’s, that it is easier to *get a wife than to get rid of one*.

The idea of this farce is taken from one of the *Annals*. It is humorously worked up by Mr. Buckstone. The principal characters, Mr. Primrose and Miss Biffin, are admirably supported by Mr. Farrén and Mrs. Glover.

 D—G,

COSTUME.

MR. PRIMROSE.—Old-fashioned dove coloured coat—white waistcoat—nankeen breeches—light brown and white-striped silk-stockings—shoes and buckles—white hat—nosegay—umbrella—George wig.—(*The clothes of the cut of 1789.*)

HENRY THORNTON.—Blue coat, with brass buttons—corduroy smalls—top-boots—buff waistcoat—coloured silk kerchief—drab hat.

ELLEN MURRAY.—*First dress:* White muslin fashionable dress, flowered flounce, &c.—*Second dress:* White scarf and bonnet.

MISS BIFFIN.—*Dressed in the fashion of the year 1789.*—Dove-coloured silk-gown—white satin petticoat, with large leno flounces—white muslin ruffles—apron—cap, with satin ribbon—stomacher of the same—a necklace of white large beads—very large gold ear-rings—high powdered tête—high shoes—black mittens, and fan.

MISS WINTERBLOSSOM.—*Dressed in the fashion of the year 1789.*—Crimson gown—white satin quilted petticoat, and white flowers—black lace apron—lace ruffles—white satin mantle, with lace edging—cap and stomacher, trimmed with white satin ribbon—fan—high shoes black tête.

BOBBIN.—*First dress:* Flowered muslin sprig short-sleeved gown—white cap, with blue ribbon.—*Second dress:* Red scarf—white bonnet, with blue ribbon.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The conductors of this work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from personal observations during the most recent performances.

EXITS and ENTRANCES.

R. means *right*; L. *Left*; F. *the Flat, or Scenerunning across the back of the Stage*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; C. D. *Centre Door*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R. RC. C. LC. L.

* * The reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

POPPING THE QUESTION.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*An Apartment, with folding doors,
c. f.—A window, l. s. e.—door r. and l.*

ELLEN discovered, working embroidery at a table, r.—and BOBBIN, seated at a table, l., trimming a cap, and singing.

Bob. I must confess, I give the preference to London above any place in England.

Ellen. Oh, Bobbin! you have been brought up there, and may, perhaps, feel the dulness of a country town more than I, who have seldom left one.

Bob. All the young men are such boobies: if a pretty girl but favours one of them with a glance, the oaf reddens up, ogles his top-boots, smooths down his hair, and continues as dumb as Mrs. Salmon's wax-work. I would set my cap at the apothecary, but I understand Miss Biffen has teased his life out, and confirmed him in his resolution of remaining in single blessedness. At all events, I propose trying my fortune with an elderly gentleman—such a nice, prime, clean old darling as Mr. Primrose.

Ellen. Have you observed, Bobbin, how changed he is lately? He used to laugh and gossip, and tell long stories of Dean Swift, and sing his favourite song of "Lovely Phillis, charming fair," and be so lively, that his company was quite pleasant.

Bob. And now he puts on his cravat with twice the precision he used to do—breathes sighs deep enough to inflate one of Mr. Thingumy's balloons—has voted snuff taking a disease—and absolutely

cultivates a peach blossom complexion. It strikes me, miss, that he is in love.

Ellen. Love, at his time of life!

Bob. He's not so very old, madam. Oh, these quiet, elderly gentlemen, are sometimes worth half a dozen of your noisy, rakish young ones. I wonder who is the object of his affections?

Ellen. Surely, neither of the old maids.

Bob. What, Miss Biffin and Miss Winterblossom? I don't know. He's played at cribbage with both of 'em, and that's a very mischievous game. I've known many an elderly heart captivated over a flush of diamonds; and a forty-year-old toe tenderly trod on at a fifteen-two. [*Jumping up hastily, and looking out of the window, L. S. E.*] As I live, there's Henry Thornton, looking up at our window. How do? how do? [Nodding.]

Ellen. [Rising.] What are you about, Bobbin?

Bob. Come here, come here. [Beckoning.] Nobody's at home. Here he comes—I know he wishes to see you very sadly; I'll run and open the door to him, for he's the tidiest young man I've seen between this and the Green Park. [Exit, L. D.]

Ellen. I hope Mr. Primrose will not return while he's here—it will look so suspicious; and lately he has disapproved of visitors.

Re-enter BOBBIN, L. D.

Bob. Come in, young man.

Enter HENRY THORNTON, L. D.

Hen. [Crossing to ELLEN.] Ah, my dear Ellen! I've been anxiously waiting to see you, since day-break. I'm in despair—I'm wretched.

Bob. (L. c.) What, in the presence of two such little loves as missus and I.

Hen. (R. c.) My friends wish to settle me in some permanent employ—their wishes have extended as far as India—an appointment has been obtained for me there—I have no excuse for refusing it—I

must depart immediately, and may, perhaps, never see you more.

Bob. Without Miss Ellen runs away with you—

Hen. Or I am instantly married: that event might occasion a delay, and then I might fortunately lose the situation. Dear Ellen, pronounce my fate. [Kneeling.] That I adore you, you are well aware: let us, then, fly to the church this instant—my friends will see the impropriety of hurrying a young bride from her native country—we shall remain in England together for ever, and be the happiest pair in the universe.

Bob. Bravo, bravo! [Patting his back.] In all my experience, I never heard the question so capitally popped.

Ellen. But my guardian—

Bob. Ask his consent at once—explain the urgent circumstances, and he'll not object.

Ellen. I'll give him a hint of my wishes, however.

Bob. A hint—no, no—speak out boldly: say, “Sir, I want to be married.” If you merely give hints, they make so many little loop-holes for a consent to creep out of. Hark! what's that? I heard the house door shut. It's Mr. P.

Ellen. [Confused.] Gracious, Henry! he must not see you here.

Bob. Put yourself out of sight for an instant—I'll soon get him away again: I'll tell him Miss Biffin's broke her arm, or in a fit, and he'll fly to her in a moment. He's on the stairs—in with you. [Opening the folding-doors c., and pushing *Henry*, who is kissing his hand to *Ellen*.] Now, don't stand kissing your fingers there, or I'll throw you out of the window. In, in, and be quiet.

[She hurries *HENRY* into the room at the folding-doors, c. f., and closes them.—*ELLEN* sits down at the table to work, r.—*BOBBIN* snatches up her cap, sits down at the table, l., and begins working, and singing again, “Meet me by moonlight alone.”]

Enter PRIMROSE, thoughtfully, L. D.

Pri. (L.C.) What a lovely morning ! not a particle of dust flying—quite a pleasure to walk. I've been strolling alone for the last half-hour in the sunshine, and have come to a conclusion that I must marry—yes, Henry Primrose, you ought to marry—you were not formed to lie alone. Dear, there's a speck of black upon my white kid gloves ! how provoking. I'll be married, I'm resolved, and will immediately consult with Miss Biffin and Miss Winterblossom upon the subject. If they see no impropriety in the act, I shall instantly put myself into conjugal order, and prepare for the momentous epoch. Eh ! bless me ! there's the dear object of my affections ;—I thought I was alone. Well, Ellen, my dear, at your work, eh ?

Ellen. [Rising and advancing, R. C.] Yes, Mr. Primrose.

Pri. (C.) Bobbin.

Bob. [Rising and advancing, L. C.] Yes, sir.

Pri. Take my hat and umbrella—you know where to put my umbrella—and hang the hat on the third peg from the door. [BOBBIN crosses to R.] Have you brushed my spencer ?

Bob. Yes, sir.

Pri. And put it carefully away in my wardrobe ?

Bob. Yes, sir.

Pri. That's a good girl—I like every thing tidy.

Bob. That's the reason you are so partial to me.

[Exit BOBBIN, R.]

Pri. Miss Ellen Murray, I wish to speak with you.

Ellen. [Aside, R. C.] I hope he did not see Henry come in.

Pri. [Handing a chair.] Allow me to place your chair near mine. Sit down, Ellen—stop, there's a thread of silk in the chair. Miss Ellen, I wish to touch upon a very serious subject.

Ellen. [Aside.] Bless me ! he must have seen Henry come in, and thinks me sly.

Pri. Hem ! You have, doubtless, observed a change in my disposition lately ?

Ellen. Not for the worse, I'm sure, sir.

Pri. [Smiling.] You think not. Whatever change you may have observed, has been caused by anxiety for you, my dear. In short, it is my wish that you should be married.

Ellen. Well, that's singular: I was endeavouring to gain courage to speak upon the same subject myself.

Pri. How delightful! what a collision of sentiment! Now we shall be able to discuss the matter unrestrained—without any of your sentimental and whalebone preliminaries. I'm convinced you would make any man a good wife. Now I would wish to put the question as delicately as possible: do you love me?

Ellen. I always respected you, sir.

Pri. And you have no objection to matrimony?

Ellen. What single young lady has, sir?

Pri. Amiable truism! you are perfectly acquainted with my disposition?

Ellen. You have ever been kind and attentive.

Pri. To speak candidly—would you wish for a husband better tempered than myself?

Ellen. That I should not, indeed, sir!

Pri. And you would not decidedly object to a man like myself? a youth with the world before him—eh?

Ellen. [Aside.] I can't say I should prefer one a little younger—it might offend.

Pri. You would not object to a man like myself?

Ellen. [Hesitating.] No—no—no, sir.

Pri. Her hesitation convinces me that I am not indifferent to her. Ellen, you shall immediately be married.

Ellen. Shall I, indeed, sir?

Pri. And to the man of your choice, too.

Ellen. Now I do love you. Oh, my dear Henry! how happy you will be.

Pri. That he will, indeed! [Aside.] Dear Henry! she never expressed herself so tenderly before. [Aloud.] I'm delighted to find you are so rea-

dy to comply with my wish. Yes, Ellen, your dear Henry is the man that can make you truly happy—that can make this terrestrial globe a celestial paradise. Dear Ellen, allow me to—*[Is about to kiss her, but stops.]* Stop, you've a little speck upon your nose—permit me—*[Takes out a folded white handkerchief—a crash is heard in the chamber, c. d. f.—Jumping up.]* Bless me! what's that?

Ellen. *[Rising hastily—aside.]* How unlucky!

Re-enter BOBBIN, r. d.—She checks PRIMROSE, as he is about to open the folding-doors.

Bob. Old Carlo has knocked down the globe of gold fish.

Pri. And the turkey carpet will be ruined—let me see.

Bob. No, no, I'll look at it. Carlo, Carlo—come here, sir.

Pri. *[Struggling with BOBBIN.]* Stand aside, and let me see the mischief.

ELLEN goes up to the table, r., pushes off the embroidery frame, and screams out.

Ellen. Oh!

Pri. *[Tenderly.]* What's the matter, dear?

Ellen. The large needle has prick'd my finger.

Pri. Let me bind it—which is the finger?

Ellen. I don't know—it's one of them.

Pri. It must be this. *[Binds one of her fingers.]* There, there—don't disturb it.

Re-enter BOBBIN, c. d. f., locking the door after her.

Bob. It was the screen, that had fallen down, sir; that was all. However, I've lock'd the door, in case the naughty old dog should get in, and find out the fish.

Pri. This little fright has quite discomposed me.

Bob. Sir, Miss Winterblossom has sent her servant, sir, to know if you were out—I—I think she's taken seriously ill, sir.

Pri. Indeed! poor lamb, I must fly to her assistance. My hat, Bobbin. *[Exit Bobbin, r. d.]*

Then I can ask her advice, and obtain her consent to my union at the same time. [Aside.

Re-enter BOBBIN, R. D., with a hat and umbrella.

Bob. Here's your hat, sir, and your umbrella.

Pri. [To ELLEN.] I hope, love, that we perfectly understand each other.

Bob. Suppose Miss Winterblossom should have met with an accident, sir.

Pri. I'll step to her instantly; Bobbin, leave the room—I—I'm busy.

Bob. [Aside—going.] I shall never get him out of the house. [Exit, R. D.

Pri. (R.) All my desire is, to see you happy.

Ellen. (L.) And you will see me happy, sir.

Pri. [Aside.] Bless her, how frank and free she is. [Aloud.] As to your fortune, that shall be left entirely at your own disposal: I shall return soon, love; therefore, do not neglect in my absence any little arrangement that may be necessary to the forthcoming change in your situation; when a couple perfectly understand each other, delay is ever a damper. Mr. Pilbury, of Aldermanbury, courted Miss Spoonbill nine years, and the young lady died of a consumption at the commencement of the tenth—therefore, take advantage even of my temporary absence, to complete any little affair, that may expedite your views. I never felt so happy, in all my days. [Crossing to L.] When one's happy, one buttons one's coat up with such gusto!—All that is now required, is the consent of Miss Biffin and Miss Winterblossom.

Ellen. Their consent!

Pri. Since I have resided here, we have ever consulted each other upon our little intentions.—I'll put the question as delicately as possible—they are ladies that are well acquainted with the world.

Ellen. If an existence of some forty or fifty years can give them the knowledge, I admit that they are.

Pri. Sweet satirist! An Aristophanes in French

curls and muslin;—at all events, I think it necessary to mention it.

Ellen. Perhaps he wishes, at the same time, to marry with one of them. [Aside.] Ah, sir! there's something very suspicious in your frequent visits to these ladies.

Pri. [Laying his hand upon his heart, and bowing.] Upon my honour, perfectly Platonic. [Aside.] A little jealous already—oh, I shall be a happy man.

Ellen. You will make a match there shortly, I dare say.

Pri. I think not.—I did endeavour to bring the lame attorney and Miss Biffin together, but she made the attorney dance after her so much, that he sent in his bill, charging her with letters and attendances, and so the affair ended: she's a sensible woman for all that. Now, remember my injunctions. Farewell, for the present, love. I'm merely going to Miss Winterblossom's—gad! I wish the happy event could take place immediately—but we must not be too impatient. Bless those flushing, beautiful eyes! if I had time, I could say something very gallant,—a kiss, however, will assure you of my sincerity. [Kisses her very gently.] Adieu! for the present. Gad! I ca'n't be more than five-and-twenty! I feel such elasticity in every limb—and such a feeling jauntiness all over me—adieu, love! you see how happy I am—if Miss Biffin and Miss Winterblossom will but consent, odds, buds! we'll have a day of it. [Sings.] “Lovely Phillis, charming fair!”

[Exit, L. D.]

Enter BOBBIN, R. D.

Bob. Who would have thought of this, madam? I put my ear to the key-hole, and heard almost every word.

Ellen. It is delightfully strange, indeed.

Bob, Hark! there goes the door; he's gone—come out, you clumsy dog.

[Unlocks the folding-door, c. r.]

Re-enter HENRY THORNTON, C. D. F.

Bob. Come out, sir ; how could you be tumbling over the chairs at such a moment ? You frightened us out of our wits.

Ellen. You heard the conversation ?

Henry. Yes, my soul ! and, I don't think we can furnish the old gentleman a pleasanter surprise, than by flying to the church instantly.

Bob. That would be charming ! Besides, he told you not to neglect any thing, during his absence.

Henry. And really wished, that the event could occur to-day ; I have a license ready. I dared to hope that you would not see me leave you for ever, and therefore made every provision.

[*Showing a license.*

Bob. You do deserve to win your fair lady ! I'd give a month's wages for such a determined lover. Oh, Miss ! put on your bonnet—don't let the opportunity slip, for the world. It will be so funny—such a thing to talk of, when you are old folks, you know—so, just step out and get married immediately.

Ellen. I'm afraid.

Bob. Afraid, nonsense ! it's nothing more than a dip in the sea, all over after the first souse : besides, think of the old maids—they may alter Mr. P.'s mind.

Henry. Ay ! should they make any objection, it might be fatal.

Bob. [*Bringing a looking-glass.*] Here, madam ; here are our bonnets and scarfs—how lucky I happened to trim a cap this morning. [*Puts it on at the glass.*] I declare, I look quite nice ! Come, Miss, put on your bonnet. Henry, have you a ring ?

Henry. No ; what's to be done ?

Bob. Never mind ; don't be agitated : I've my grandmother's in my purse—it fits Miss Ellen exactly ; she has often tried it on.

Ellen. But this is too hurried—too sudden.

Bob. But it's your guardian's wish.

Henry. Think of separation for ever—think of India.

Bob. Shipwrecks and wild beasts.

Henry. The value of the time present.

Bob. The wishes of Mr. P.

Henry. The agreeable surprise it will occasion.

Bob. The license ready.

Henry. My love for you.

Bob. My wish to be a bridesmaid, that I may be married before the year's out.

Henry. Come, love, come.

Bob. [Going, L.] Ah! there's Miss Biffin at the foot of the stairs

Henry. What shall we do?

Bob. Objection in her looks.

Henry. We must avoid her.

Bob. As you would a bailiff—we'll go out at the back door.

Henry. Lead the way, Bobbin.

Bob. To the church—

Henry. And happiness. [Exeunt, R. D.]

Enter Miss BIFFIN, L. D.

Miss B. Anybody here? I certainly heard a most extraordinary noise. Though they said that Mr. P. was not within, I thought I'd just step up to be convinced. There seems to have been a confusion of some sort in the room; surely, Mr. Primrose has not been romping with his ward. Very singular! Where can he be?—Gone to Miss Winterblossom's, perhaps. I wonder what his intentions are in that quarter,—nothing serious, I hope. I can't read Mr. P. at all—can't make him out. If he speaks tenderly to me one moment, he repeats the little endearment to Miss Winterblossom, the next. It is now time I should know which of us he really intends to decide upon, because I may thoughtlessly allow my heart to go too far.—Hush! I hear some one on the stairs,—it is his step; glad I waited. How do I look? [Looking in the glass.] My hat becomes me amazingly!

Enter PRIMROSE, L. D.

Pri. What, Miss Biffin! Good morning. You are the very person I was thinking of, and wishing to see.

Miss B. That my thoughts and wishes coincide with yours, is evident from my presence here. You'll join our palm-loo party, this evening, I hope. The curate will be one of us. You, of course, will beau Miss Winterblossom?

Pri. We'll arrange that affair, presently. Pray be seated. [Miss Biffin sits, c.] Miss Winterblossom has fully consented to my marriage with Ellen, and, if Miss Biffin be equally kind, then there is nothing to retard my happiness. Bless me, what a litter the room is in! the tambour-frame prostrate, chairs out of their places,—a dressing glass here!—Bobbin! Ellen! [Goes to the door.] Ellen, poor child! she has retired to meditate upon her approaching condition.—Very natural! Now for Miss B. : I'll just turn the snap of the door, then we shall not be interrupted.

Miss B. He's fastened the door!—Mr. P.!

Pri. [Crossing to L.] Sit down, my dear Miss B. Now for the other. [Secures the other door.

Miss B. what can this mean? I'm a little uneasy!

Pri. Now, Miss B. [Draws his chair close to her—she retreats.] Eh! why do you retreat? I merely wish to put a question as delicately as possible, respecting an affair very essential to my happiness.

Miss B. Oh! indeed! [Drawing nearer.] I should not wonder but he's going to make a proposal.

[Aside.

Pri. [Taking her hand.] My dear Miss B.—

Miss B. [Simpering.] Sir!

Pri. Lap-dog quite well?

Miss B. Not very well. Poor dear, thing! ate too many stewed oysters last night.

Pri. Indeed! Hem! the subject upon which I am about to venture to speak, is of so peculiar a nature, that my dear Miss Biffin must excuse any want of connexion in the detail.

Miss B. [Simpering.] I believe—I think—I ima-

gine I understand your meaning, sir. Pray compose yourself.

Pri. You understand me? Then, madam, this—this attachment, of which I would speak, you are acquainted with?

Miss B. [Sighing.] I own, I have suspected it.

Pri. Have you, indeed? I imagined no one could have perceived it. But love, my dear Miss Biffin, is like the hunted ostrich, that hides his head only, and fancies his whole body is concealed.

Miss B. [Aside.] Something always whispered that I was his choice.

Pri. May I, then, dare to hope that this too, too-tender affection for one of the most deserving of her sex, merits Miss Biffin's approbation?

Miss B. Sir, I protest I was not fully prepared—that is, my agitation is such, that I can scarcely reply.

Pri. How sweetly sympathetic! Yet, pardon, if I say I cannot allow you to leave this place, without knowing the sentiments of one whose judgment is so paramount.

Miss B. Well, Mr. P., to be candid, [Sighing.] if I must answer—[Sidling.]—if you will take advantage of my agitation, [Smiling.] I do own, your merit commands my approbation; your proposal has my concurrence.

Pri. Then I'm the happiest of men! Your approbation, only, was wanting to perfect my felicity; without that, I could not have ventured to complete the union, dear as it is to my heart.

Miss B. [Rather amazed.] Of course not.

Pri. I have mentioned the affair to Miss Winter-blossom; and, so far from throwing any obstacle in the way, the dear lady seemed quite delighted.

Miss B. [Sneeringly.] Any obstacle she might have offered could have made no difference.

Pri. [Rising.] No, no; but I thought it right to name it: it is fit one should learn the opinions of one's friends upon such an occasion. But don't stir yet, my dear Miss B. [Rising.] I must now hasten to expedite matters. I saw a parcel of deli-

cate white kid gloves, to be disposed of, in the next street—I'll run and secure the bargain ; so, don't stir—I'll return again immediately,—make yourself quite at home while I'm gone. You must not wonder at any little discrepancies in my conduct, for I shall now be in such a bustle for a week or two, that I may commit the strangest vagaries and be quite unconscious. I knew you would offer no objection.—Now for licenses, true-lover's knots, wedding-rings, bride-cakes, cradles, and caudles—eh, Miss Biffin ? I feel myself a married man already. A bachelor ! of what use is he ? what end does he answer ? None, but to act the part of a walking-stick in the street, or a screen at a tea-party ; to run errands for ladies, and fetch and carry like a Dutch pug. I'll be a married man, Miss Biffin, the head of a house, the father of a family ; children and grand-children shall crowd about me, and my path shall be strewed with primroses. There's a picture, eh, my dear ? Oh, I shall be a happy fellow !

[Unfastens the door, L., and exit.

Miss B. [Rising.] How elated he seems. At length, I am about to be a bride. Mr. P. has popp'd the question. What new and singular emotions fill my heart ? Very strange he should talk about a license, before he has named the day ; but excess of joy makes one heedless of formalities. [Looking around.] This house will be mine ; what alterations I'll make ; I'll have handsome pink curtains for that window, throw these two apartments into an elegant dancing-room, and have a lovely loo-table in the centre. I'll show Mr. P. a little of my taste ; and, that we may pass the honey-moon more pleasantly, I'll commence learning the piano. As for Miss Ellen, I shall not allow her and Mr. P. to be too much together—she shall keep more to her own room. I'll make a thorough reform in all Mr. P.'s habits. Some one is coming up-stairs.—Dear, dear ! strange, to be sure ! The very person I was thinking of, to be my bridesmaid. My dear Miss Winterblossom !

Enter Miss Winterblossom, l. d.

Miss W. My love! Good morning, dear! [*They kiss each other.*] So pleased to see you. I've been to your house, was told you were not at home, guessed you were here, and find I am right in my conjecture. *P.* at home, dear?

Miss B. He will be here instantly; he has just stepped out for a moment, love. Sit down.

Miss W. (l. c.) [*Aside.*] How astonished she will be to hear that Mr. Primrose has offered me his hand—has popp'd the question at last.

Miss B. (c.) You complained of rheumatism last night,—better, love?

Miss W. Did I complain?—Oh, yes, I recollect, I did cry out: It was only a little ruse, dear. The fact was, as Mr. *P.* passed me, to hand Miss Pocock her chocolate, he pinched my arm to such a degree, that I was glad to make that an excuse.

Miss B. Did Mr. *P.* pinch your arm?

Miss W. Yes, dear.

Miss B. How very incorrect! What could he be thinking of? I'll mention the subject severely. [*Aside.*]

Miss W. But sit down, dear. You have seen Mr. Primrose this morning, I suppose. [*They sit.*]

Miss B. Oh, yes.

Miss W. Did he touch upon a delightful subject?

Miss B. I must confess he did, love.

Miss W. Then he has opened all to you, has he? He told me, when he left my house, that he should do so.

Miss B. He has perfectly explained his sentiments.

Miss W. Well, then, love, you and I have been acquainted many years—

Miss B. Not so very many years.

Miss W. No, no, dear; but a long time, you know.

Miss B. Yes, my love.

Miss W. And we have ever been the best of friends.

Miss B. Yes, dear.

Miss W. Therefore, I've a little favour to beg, which I am sure you will not refuse.

Miss B. I think I can guess what it is, my dear.

Miss W. I dare say you do, love.—You know there must be a bridesmaid on the occasion.

Miss B. Precisely what I was thinking of.

Miss W. Now, I should be very happy, my dear Miss Biffin—

Miss B. I understand, my dear friend. Undoubtedly, I wish it to be so.

Miss W. For I'm sure that you, in preference to any other in the world, I should be delighted to have as my bridesmaid.

Miss B. Your bridesmaid, Miss Winterblossom! —Oh, yes, yes, certainly; I promise, when you are married.

Miss W. When I'm married, dear Biffin? You're bewildered!

Miss B. No, love; 'tis you that are bewildered. Did you not just ask to accompany me as my bridesmaid?

Miss W. When? Where? What do you mean? You are jesting.

Miss B. Indeed, I am not, Miss Winterblossom; this is no jesting matter.

Miss W. You don't comprehend me, Miss Biffin.—In a word, do you wish to appear as my friend, on my approaching union with Mr. Primrose?

Miss B. Your union, ma'am?

Miss W. Yes, ma'am: Mr. P. has, as you know, this very morning, made proposals.

Miss B. Yes, to me.

Miss W. To you? Mr. P. propose to marry you? Impossible! He came to me, not an hour since, and implored me to favour his attachment, and mentioned marriage. Did you not, this moment, say he had told you of it?

Miss B. Of his affection for me; and he certainly said that he had informed you of it; which, though I considered a liberty, without consulting me, I overlooked in him at the time. Had he known that I was thus to be insulted, he would have placed his confidence elsewhere. [They rise.

Miss W. I tell you, ma'am, that I am the object of Mr. P.'s choice!

Miss B. Woman, 'tis false!

Miss W. If he's in the house, I'll call him. Mr. P.! Mr. P.! [Goes to the door, L., and calls.]

Miss B. Don't make that disturbance here. Mr. P. is not in the house, ma'am.

Miss W. When he returns, he shall convince you himself of his intention to marry me.

Miss B. You! marry you, you ugly old wretch!

Miss W. What do you say, madam?—Ugly! there, look there, madam! [Fetching the glass from the table, R., and presenting it to her.] Look at yourself in that glass, and then be convinced of the utter untruth of your assertion; of the total impossibility of any body ever marrying you.

Miss B. How dare you insult me in this manner, miss?—I'll ring the bell for the servant to turn you out.

Miss W. Turn me out! out of my own house that is to be!

Miss B. Your house?—Oh, I shall faint!

Miss W. Turn me out, indeed! who will dare to attempt it?—Don't imagine I'm to be frightened, madam; I can show a proper spirit, madam! [Throwing the furniture about the room.] There, there!

Miss B. Desist, madam—desist!

Miss W. [Crossing to L., and throwing up the window, L. s. E.] Help! murder! Mr. P.! Mr. P.!

Miss B. Come away from the window, madam, and don't disgrace this house. Come, madam, come.

Miss W. [Calling louder.] Help! help!

Re-enter PRIMROSE, with the gloves, L. d.—He stands astonished.—MISS BIFFIN and MISS WINTER-BLOSSOM sink into the chairs.

Pri. What, in the name of patience, is the matter? I thought there were boxers in the house. Here's litter, here's confusion. My mahogany pembroke is almost shattered, and my cheffonier maimed for ever! Dear, dear, dear Miss W., what is the matter.

Miss B. (R.) Don't go near her, I beg, sir;

you'll give her another attack of the rheumatism ; you'll pinch her arm again, I suppose.

Pri. (c.) Oho ! that is the cause of dispute, eh ?— Egad ! I begin to think myself of some consequence among the petticoats, at last !—Well, Miss B., where was the crime ?—Bless you ! you can't expect us young bucks always to be circumspect ; 'tis the fault of youth, Miss B. ; we are not stone or ice—we must have our little joke, if we die for it—eh, Miss B., eh ?

Miss W. (l.) Come away from the insulting creature : she would have stabbed me if she could have found her scissors.

Pri. Come, come, we must have no quarreling at this moment ; all must be smiles and harmony now : let me put the room a little to rights, and then I insist upon understanding the cause of this dispute, that I may make peace between you.

[*Puts the room in order, and draws a chair between them.*

Miss W. (l.) Mr. Primrose, you did me the honour of a visit this morning.

Pri. (c.) Yes, madam ; and never did a visit at your dwelling confer more pleasure.

Miss B. (r.) Sir !

Miss W. You hear, madam, you hear ; you spoke of an intended—of a desired—on your part, a desired union.

Pri. I trust, desired on both sides ; the effect of reciprocity of feeling and mutual affection.

Miss B. But, to satisfy Miss Winterblossom, may I inquire the name of the future Mrs. Primrose ?

Pri. The name ! I thought you were acquainted with it ; I thought that was perfectly known when I gained your approval to the intended event—that is, to my marriage with my beloved—my beautiful—my charming—

Both. [*Anxiously.*] Well ! well !

Pri. Ellen Murray !

Miss B. [*Starting up.*] Ellen Murray !

Miss W. Ellen Murray !

Miss B. You vile man!

Miss W. You base deceiver!

Miss B. To trifle with one's feelings.

Miss W. To touch a tender string, and then rudely snap it asunder.

Pri. Ladies, hear me—'tis your own mistake.

Miss B. The lame attorney shall commence an action for breach of promise.

Miss W. Betrayer of innocence!

Miss B. I never could have thought it—deluder!

Miss W. Deceiver.

Miss B. Villain!

Miss W. Wretch!

Pri. Bobbin! Bobbin! [Taking a hand-bell, and ringing violently.] Will you be silent, ladies?

Miss W. Oh! that I were a man.

Miss B. That my brother Peter was alive!

Pri. Upon my honour, I'll send for a constable!—[Snatching a chair to defend himself.] My life's in danger: I'll not be frightened out of my wits in my own house. Will you let me explain?

Miss B. Well, defend yourself! defend yourself!

Pri. I think it's time. I've scarcely breath to utter a word. I asked each of you if you were acquainted with the circumstances of my attachment.

Miss B. You did, sir.

Miss W. Well, sir; well.

Pri. I was told by each of you, that you were already acquainted with it.

Both. Go on, sir.

Pri. And the question of approbation you have construed into an acceptance of your hands—when I never dreamed of you—never thought of you—would as soon marry my great aunt Charity as either of you. You have roused my passion, and if the truth will pop out, the fault is yours, not mine.

[A loud knocking heard at the door, R.]

Bob. [Without, R. D.] Open the door, please.

Pri. There's somebody come to my assistance at last. Dear me, I had fastened her out. Come in. [Opening the door, R.] Come in.

Re-enter BOBBIN, R. D. MISS WINTERBLOSSOM and MISS BIFFIN shake hands and embrace.

Pri. Come in, before you behold my bleeding corpse. [Falls into a chair, r. c.] I've run upon Scylla, and bumped against Charybdis; Etna and Vesuvius have been in a state of eruption at the same moment, and I've been between the two fires. It's a mercy I'm alive.

Bob. [Courtseying.] Sir, your wishes are fulfilled.

Pri. Are they? But you have made very little haste. Didn't you hear me? You should have broken open the door.

Bob. La, sir, we have made as much haste as possible. I'm sure my dear young missus has obeyed your injunctions to the very letter.

Pri. Making every haste to forward our union? That's right: let me get married, I shall then have a protector.

Bob. Your union! No, sir; her union.

Pri. Well, well; it's all the same.

Bob. Oh, dear, no! there's a vast difference between you and Mr. Henry Thornton.

Pri. [Staring.] Eh! Henry Thornton!

Bob. You told Miss Murray, as was, that she should have the man of her choice.

Pri. Right.

Bob. And desired her to lose no time.

Pri. Exactly!

Bob. Then, when you stepped out, the man of her choice stepped in—the question was popped—the answer was acceptance—the ring and license were ready; and now allow me to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thornton.

Enter HENRY THORNTON and ELLEN MURRAY, R.D.

Bob. And there's the certificate.

[Giving a marriage certificate to PRIMROSE, who looks at it and the parties with astonishment.

Pri. I'll never pop the question again, as long as I live.

Miss B. Don't say so, my dear Mr. Primrose ; you don't know what may happen.

Miss W. There's a fate in marriage, my dear Mr. P. ; yours may take place yet.

Ellen. I hope you are agreeably surprised, Mr. Primrose.

Pr. Very ! Ah ! I see the mistake. Henry ! the same name. Give me your hand, Ellen ; take care of this hymeneal billet. [*Returning certificate.*] Yours, Mr. Thornton—be kind to her, you rogue. As for me, I've this consolation—My Lord North observed once, it was easier to get a wife than to get rid of one—no offence, I hope. However, the white gloves will yet be of service. There, ladies—[*Presenting gloves to each.*] Of course, we shall have a dance and a rubber in the evening ; and perhaps, after all, it may not be—indeed, I hope it may not be, the last time that I shall—POP THE QUESTION.

DISPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

HENRY. ELLEN. BOB. PRIM. MISS B. MISS W.
R.]

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